

STATEMENT BY STEWART BLOODWORTH
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Before the
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

June 23, 2001

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. We are happy you have chosen Middle Georgia for this hearing. I am Stewart Bloodworth, a farmer from Houston County, Georgia. My farming career spans some forty years with a 4,000 acre operation which includes general row crops, up to 20,000 hogs per year and a 150 beef cattle herd. All of this has been put together in the years since I completed college. I state this to verify that in America it is possible to start with nothing and achieve much. This could not have been possible without hard work, the support of a devoted wife, and at times, a government that helped market our products.

Now that I am in the twilight of my farming career, I am better able to assess what has worked for me and what has not. Only recently, I acknowledged to my Congressman, Saxby Chambliss, that under present conditions, I could no longer farm as I have in the past and meet my financial obligations. I, therefore, am in the process of selling 1200 acres of good farming cropland for residential development. This is not to say that the government owes me anything, but present farm programs are making me too dependent on government payments that cannot last forever.

Government policies in our hemisphere and throughout the world will not allow us to continue business as usual. It concerns me that this generation of farmers is so dependent on government assistance. I would prefer to be paid at the market place.

I realize that as a benevolent country, we have exported our technology to the point that other countries are in a better position to compete than we are in a world market economy.

Surely we have learned something from past history. We should know what worked and what did not. Present farm programs and technology are encouraging more grain production in the Southeast, an area previously planted predominantly in peanuts and cotton. We need to support programs by region so we are not competing with each other. We can over-produce our market anytime we have favorable weather conditions; therefore, we must have acreage restrictions. We know this has worked in the past.

There are three main points I hope you will consider in this farm program:

1. The past five years have been disastrous for the farmers in my area because of severe drought. As you develop a farm program, you will put all of us out of business if these low yields are used for production history.
2. There must be an incentive that will encourage farmers to reduce the tilling of our soil, to maintain a cleaner environment, to grow a safe food supply and to provide an affordable product for the American consumer. You hold the throttle to the engine.
3. We must do whatever it takes to sell American products. We cannot allow surplus or oversupply at the farmer's expense. The PIK program of the past should be considered. If we do not want acreage restrictions, we must do something about over production.

In summary, the loan program is necessary. However, I think it should be implemented as it was in the past where the government forfeited the loan for the commodity in nine months. The AMTA payment is well established and facilitated; however, the FSA office needs to tighten the number of worksheets or at least scrutinize and make sure that each recipient is fully invested in the crop.

Thank you for allowing me to appear before you.